

THE RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL
OF NORTH WITCHFORD.

Annual Report of the Medical Officer of
Health for the Year 1943.

MR. CHAIRMAN and GENTLEMEN,—

I beg to present to you my report for the year 1943 on the health conditions of your district during that period.

I also present the Sanitary Inspector's report.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

CECIL THOMAS,

Medical Officer of Health.

THE GENERAL HEALTH of the district has been good. There was an epidemic of Influenza in December when a large number of cases were attended. Fortunately the epidemic was of a mild nature.

GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR HEALTH SERVICES.

(i) Public Health Officers.

Medical Officer of Health—Cecil Thomas, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P.
Sanitary Inspector—D. Lister, M.R.San.I., M.S.I.A.

(ii) Nursing in the Home.

The entire district has the services of Trained Nurses, under the control of local Associations.

(iii) Hospitals.

Voluntary subscriptions enable patients to obtain treatment at Cambridge and Peterborough Hospitals. The Doddington E.M.S. Hospital is available for some Surgical and Medical cases.

(iv) Ambulance Facilities.

These are obtained from Manea, Chatteris and Whittlesea.

Statistics:

	Total.	M.	F.
Live Births: Legitimate	86	47	39
Illegitimate	3	2	1
Still Births	0		
Deaths	56	29	27

The Causes of Death were:

Heart Diseases	14
Intra Cranial Vascular Lesions	8
Other Diseases of Vascular System	2
Cancer	10
Other Digestive	1
Influenza	2
Diabetes	1
Bronchitis	3

Pneumonia	1
Suicide	1
Violence other than Suicide	3
All other causes	9

Prevalence and Control of Infectious Disease.

There have been four cases of Scarlet Fever and two cases of Diphtheria. They were satisfactorily isolated and spread of infection avoided.

NOTIFIABLE INFECTIOUS DISEASES, 1943.

For the Rural District of North Witchford.

Disease.	Total Notified.	Deaths.
Scarlet Fever	4	0
Diphtheria	2	0
Pneumonia	16	1
Measles	17	0
Puerperal Pyrexia	1	0

NORTH WITCHFORD RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL.

Sanitary Inspector's Report for the Year 1943.

In preparing this report it has not been found possible to give numbers of inspections made and notices served, as I have been unable to find any detailed record of work done before my appointment in August 1943, and lack of clerical staff has made it impossible for me to make up lists from such records as are available. The work of sanitary inspection is carried on by me in a part-time capacity, and pressure of work in my principal appointment, together with Civil Defence duties, do not permit of my spending as much time in the area as I feel I ought to do. The following brief notes will give some idea of the work done during the year by myself and by my predecessor, also some of the problems of sanitary administration with which the district is faced.

HOUSING.

As is the case in most other districts, the standard of housing accommodation is steadily deteriorating, but little progress can be made in the way of condemnation while all existing accommodation is still taxed to its utmost. During the year one Demolition Order was made in respect of an unfit house which had become positively dangerous. The tenant has since been rehoused by the Council. An undertaking not to re-let after the present tenant vacates was accepted in respect of another unfit cottage, but so far this is still in occupation.

Work of repairs and improvements to existing dwellings is at a very low ebb, due to the extreme shortage of building labour in the area, such men as are available being mainly taken up with essential agricultural building work. Informal action has secured the remedying of various minor defects during the year. One statutory notice had to be served for insufficient sanitary accommodation to a block of three cottages, and this was complied with by the provision of two additional pail closets.

WATER SUPPLY.

There is nothing of importance to report in those parts of the area served by the Wisbech Waterworks Co. With regard to the Council's own water undertaking at Manea, the appointment at the beginning of the year of a part-time water inspector has done much to cut down the waste of water and so improve the pressure. The Council are handicapped by having no regulations with regard to waste or misuse of water, and it is unfortunate that permission could not be obtained for the adoption of such regulations during the war, which is proving to be the very time they are most needed. The lack of pressure at Manea is a serious matter, and will require consideration after the war.

Benwick village is still without a supply, and there are many other outlying properties in other parishes where extensions will have to be considered when conditions permit.

No samples of water were taken for examination during the year.

SEWERAGE AND SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

There is need for the provision of a proper sewerage and sewage disposal system to each of the four villages, and the periodical cleansing by the Council

of dykes polluted by the village sewers, besides being costly, is not the right answer to the problem. The existing sewage beds at Doddington and Wimblington are practically derelict.

REFUSE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL.

The Council's scheme for the regular collection of nightsoil and emptying of cesspools, etc., carried out by private contractors, gives reasonable satisfaction, as far as contract labour can do in matters of this kind. Beyond this, the Council only undertake the collection of tins and bottles from the village properties once a month, through the agency of the same contractors, and the indiscriminate dumping of other refuse by occupiers in the villages is sometimes a matter for concern. The Council should, when the time is more opportune, give consideration to a more comprehensive scavenging scheme for the built-up parts of the district.

MEAT AND FOOD INSPECTION.

All fresh meat supplied in the district is killed at the Ministry of Food abattoirs in the neighbouring Urban District, where it is subjected to inspection at the time of slaughter. No routine inspection is therefore made in this district. Various stocks of other foodstuffs have been inspected from time to time, usually at the request of traders, but very little unsound food has had to be dealt with during the year.

MILK AND DAIRIES.

Eighteen new applications for registration were received during the year, and the premises were duly registered, though many were well below the required standard set by the Milk & Dairies Order. Where necessary, notices were served at the same time for such defects as existed. Unfortunately, mainly owing to difficulties of labour and materials, very little progress has been made during the year in complying with these notices. Many of the applications referred to were found to be from persons who had been carrying on business for some time without being registered. I think it is safe to say that all persons in the trade in the district are now registered.

The number of cowkeepers at the end of the year was 42, and the approximate number of cows in milk was 300. Twenty-one persons are registered as retail purveyors and 30 as wholesale traders, so that in many cases both wholesale and retail business is carried on though the proportion of retail trade is usually small—only a few pints to nearby residents. The number of cowkeepers in the district is decreasing, and in my opinion is likely to continue to do so.

There was only one licence for the production of "Accredited" milk in force in the district at the end of the year, and no "Tuberculin Tested" licences. T.T. and Pasteurised milk are however sold in the area by a dairyman from the adjoining Urban District.

Clean milk production in the area, generally speaking, is not very satisfactory. In spite of the fact that the Milk and Dairies Order has been in force for over 16 years, there are still cowsheds in use in the district which do not comply with the most elementary requirements of the Order, while the provisions as to cleanliness in handling of milk and utensils are not always observed in their entirety. The gradual extension of the Ministry of Agriculture's National Milk Testing and Advisory Scheme has served to bring to light many of the worst offenders, and has also provided for the producers a free service of help and advice in the matter of clean milk production; advice which, from my experience, I am sorry to say is not always taken in the spirit in which it is offered.

D. LISTER,
Sanitary Inspector.

